UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF RADIATION PROGRAMS-LAS VEGAS FACILITY
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NOV 2 1983

Tim Aragon
Tribal Council
Pueblo of Laguna
Laguna, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Aragon:

I looked at some of the radon measurements which Anaconda made at the west gate to the Jackpile mine and they appear normal when compared to other parts of the country. The measurements for February 1979 through March 1981 ranged from "not detected" to 2560 picocuries per cubic meter of air. The average was 650. I do not know the quality of the data so I cannot tell you how true these values are. Of the seventeen monthly measurements made, the highest is twice the next lower value. I suspect there might be an error in it. If I disregard that measurement, the average becomes 528.

The National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements has published data which range from 20 to 1040 picocuries per cubic meter of air for Illinois, New York, Ohio, and New Mexico. They show 240 for New Mexico (measured in 1959), however, we have analyzed recent samples from around Grants and Santa Fe which range up to about 700 picocuries per cubic meter.

In summary, the measurements near Paguate (west gate) do not appear to be different than the rest of the country. You may still choose to put some monitors in Paguate to assure the residents that radon levels there are not higher than in the surrounding countryside.

I discussed with my staff computer modelling the protore piles in the Jackpile to see what the radiation impact on Paguate might be. Since the mine is so large and so close to Paguate, the computer modelling currently available will not work well. One would have to study each pile's effect on Paguate and add the results. This would require eight or ten computations depending upon how many protore or waste piles we study. Each computation would require two or three days of staff time and two to five hundred dollars worth of computer time. When it is done, it is only an estimate. Also, reclamation of the mine will change the source of the radiation depending on how the piles are stabilized. I do not think the computer modelling is worth doing. Placing instruments in Paguate to make actual measurements is the surest method to describe the radiation conditions there.

Sincerely yours,

Wayne A. Bliss

Wayne A. Bliss, Director
Office of Radiation Programs-LVF

cc:
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